

Engaging Law, Community, and Victims in Dialogue: From Conflict to Shared Understanding

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I. INTRODUCTION

The year following 9/11 witnessed a significant change in the climate and personal experiences of citizens in the greater metropolitan area of our nation's capital. Communities and organizations were challenged to deal with a variety of sensitive and complex issues that were only intensified by the ongoing sense of threat.¹ In northern Virginia, there had been numerous stories of raids conducted by federal agents on immigrants' homes. "Foreigners" who may have posed a threat to the security and well-being of our American neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces had been singled out.² While these raids were an effort on the part of law enforcement to increase security by doing investigations, they also increased the sense of fear within the immigrant communities as well as the dominant culture. As an outcome, there were increased and reinforced stereotypes that exacerbated cultural, ethnic, and religious differences within many communities.³ In particular, greater metropolitan D.C. residents saw first hand the hatred behind terrorism and found themselves, more than a year later, having to navigate the complexities related to the presence of large immigrant populations, themselves being part of that population and fearing the backlash against them.⁴

At the same time and at the national level, there was significant interest on the part of law enforcement to develop strategies to achieve justice for

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¹ See Suhasini Haidar, *Immigrants Fear Backlash To Terror Attacks*, CNN.COM, Sept. 19, 2001, <http://cnnstudentnews.cnn.com/2001/US/09/19/gen.hate.crimes/index.htm> 1.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ See U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, *Initiative to Combat Post-9/11 Discriminatory Backlash*, http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/nordwg_mission.html (last visited Oct. 21, 2006).

victims of crime.⁵ When more than thirty million people in the U.S. fall victim to crime each year,⁶ and an overwhelming percentage of these victims represent minority populations—e.g., African-Americans, Hispanics, Muslims—the needs of victims must be a priority for the police community.⁷

This Article conveys the viability of dialogue as a constructive intervention methodology that can also be preventative in addressing identity-based, victim-based, or both types of conflicts. It begins by describing what identity is, ways our identities are formed, and how identity impacts our behaviors. It illustrates ways our narratives—the stories we tell—“position” others and ourselves within these stories. It demonstrates how this positioning can and does exacerbate conflict. It discusses the role of victim and the impact of a victim-position on the self and others. A case involving law enforcement, citizens of diverse communities, and victims of stereotyping and hatred is presented, whereby dialogue provides opportunities for participants to understand the complexity of human relationships within a social constructivist paradigm, and make intentional changes in their own lives, in the lives of members of their communities, and the practices of law enforcement.

The case was a collaborative effort between the Fairfax County Community Resilience Project and the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) at George Mason University that began one year after September 11, 2001—hereafter referred to as 9/11—to rebuild “community resilience” as neighbors witnessed fear and suspicion of others not like themselves in their own communities.⁸

⁵ See generally INT’L ASS’N OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, SUMMIT ON VICTIMS OF CRIME: WHAT DO VICTIMS WANT? EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME (2000), <http://www.theiacp.org/documents/pdfs/Publications/WhatDoVictimsWantSummitReport.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.* at 1.

⁷ See generally US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Statistics, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict_v.htm#race (last visited Oct. 24, 2006) (showing the trend in violent crime statistics where for every 1000 persons in their respective racial group, twenty-seven blacks, twenty whites, and fourteen persons of other races sustained a violent crime; Blacks were more likely than whites to be victimized by carjacking, American Indians experienced violence at rates more than twice that of Blacks, 2½ times that of whites and 4½ times that of Asians. Hispanics were victims of overall violence and of robbery and aggravated assault at rates higher than non-Hispanics).

⁸ Drs. Sara Cobb, Sandra Cheldelin, and Carlos Sluzki developed the proposal and secured the contract. Drs. Cheldelin and Sluzki served as principle investigators (PIs) for various components of the project.

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Following the presentation of the case, this Article concludes with an evaluation of dialogue as a useful “platform” to promote change when working with identity-based conflicts, and may serve to help meet the needs of victims of crime, unlawful stereotyping, abuse, or discrimination.

II. IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIONING THEORY

The concept and meaning of identity varies across cultures, but what seems to be relevant to all is:

[P]ersonal identity—a sense of who we are as individuals—emerges and solidifies. Not in isolation though, it is in constant negotiation with collective, cultural identities. These negotiations reflect cultural and social changes, and role requirements over time, and provide templates to understand individuals’ uniqueness and similarities with members of their own groups.⁹

Personal identity involves the socially constructed roles we adopt and the social constraints we create to identify who does and who does not belong with us.¹⁰ Born from the stories we tell and have been told, our identities unfold as social constructions that are deeply shaped by our culture, our families, social networks, and societal norms.¹¹ The roles associated with these are learned, have historical and cultural bases that define them, and are influenced by other variables such as gender, ethnicity, class, and age.¹²

Hoare describes identity as the “personal coherence” or “selfsameness” we develop over time as we take on roles that reflect cultural and social expectations or requirements.¹³ Okun, Fried, and Okun maintain that self and identity are virtually synonymous¹⁴ in the dominant U.S. culture where the individual has a set of honored rights and obligations that are historically rooted, influenced by European and North American philosophers—such as

⁹ See Sandra Cheldelin, *Gender and Violence: Redefining the Moral Ground*, in IDENTITY, MORALITY AND THREAT ch. 11 (Daniel Rothbart & Karina Korostelina eds., forthcoming 2006) (manuscript at 9, on file with author).

¹⁰ *Id.* (manuscript at 10).

¹¹ See generally PHYLLIS CHESLER, WOMEN’S INHUMANITY TO WOMEN (2001).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Carol H. Hoare, *Psychosocial Identity Development and Cultural Others*, 70 J. OF COUNSELING AND DEV. 45, 47 (1991).

¹⁴ BARBARA F. OKUN, JANE FRIED & MARCIA L. OKUN, UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: A LEARNING-AS-PRACTICE PRIMER 137–38 (1999).

Locke, Hobbes and Mills—who believed individual rights can be balanced against the rights and needs of the greater community.¹⁵

Most researchers agree that understanding identity cannot be considered solely individualistically. Taylor, Bougie, and Caouette make an important distinction between personal identity—the core of the self—and *collective* identity—the context within which the individual develops a sense of herself or himself—and state that these are in constant negotiation.¹⁶ To understand *individuals'* uniqueness, people compare themselves with members of their own group. But without a collective identity, there is no template to make this comparison.¹⁷ Further, they argue that the *cultural collective identity* takes on special significance in forming our cultural identity.¹⁸ Since it is the culture that articulates the goals, values, norms, and acceptable behaviors for all of its members in particular circumstances, then it is the essential influence on all of the domains of the individual.¹⁹

The sustainability of any identity—a police officer, for example—by the social institutions—in this case, law enforcement—hints at the complexity of any sustainable intervention when dealing with identity-based conflicts. Positioning theory helps explain this complexity. Talking about positions as an alternative to a generally static role (police officer) introduces the dynamic nature of identity. Positioning addresses the sequential nature of a storyline that unfolds as we interact with others.²⁰ These interactions result in a predictable “positioning” of ourselves,²¹ and those positions have social sanctions constructed within them. For example, if a community reflects a racial asymmetry, the less powerful—usually the minority—is likely to be positioned at the very beginning as disadvantaged.²²

¹⁵ *Id.* at 140.

¹⁶ Donald M. Taylor, Evelynne Bougie & Julie Caouette, *Applying Positioning Principles to a Theory of Collective Identity*, in *THE SELF AND OTHERS: POSITIONING INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS IN PERSONAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT* 197, 206–07 (Rom Harré & Fathali Moghaddam eds., 2003).

¹⁷ *Id.* at 201.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 203.

¹⁹ *Id.* (suggesting that a similar all-encompassing identity for some cultures is the “religious” collective identity).

²⁰ See generally Luk van Langenhove & Rom Harré, *Introducing Positioning Theory*, in *POSITIONING THEORY* 14–32 (Rom Harré & Luk van Langenhove eds., 1999).

²¹ *Id.* at 20–21.

²² *Id.*

Harré and Moghaddam explain this process as a “position triangle” with three dominant components.²³ One is the *position* itself that has embedded in it permission to conduct socially acceptable actions or behaviors.²⁴ For example, police may ticket drivers for speeding or arrest people for disorderly conduct. It is not only acceptable; it is expected of them in their role. The second part of the triangle is the *speech, other acts*, or both, of the exchange between the parties.²⁵ The language or gestures we use imply “position.”²⁶ Harré and Moghaddam use the example of a handshake—an intended action—that can have multiple meanings: a gesture of welcome, a note of congratulations, or a commitment to a shared agreement.²⁷ Its meaning is in the sequential interaction, and once the interaction is interpreted it takes on a life of its own with rules and expectations.²⁸ The triangle is complete with the “storyline.”²⁹ Stories progress in an orderly and predictable way as clusters of “narratives.”³⁰ To illustrate: an officer (position) is in charge at a crime scene. His language (speech or other acts) positions him with legitimate power. When he tells an onlooker to leave the scene (beginning of the storyline), she will do so. But if in this case, the onlooker tells the officer that she witnessed part of the crime, then the officer repositions himself to permit the onlooker to be part of an ongoing story.

When positioning is indirect—when attributions of mental, characterological, or moral traits of identity are negative—it intentionally allows one to take a moral high ground and places the other unfavorably.³¹ These positions are often nested in larger systems that serve to reinforce them.³² In a situation such as 9/11, the barrage of public information that followed the terrorist events was typically presented by “experts”—news anchors, top local, state, and federal officials, political leaders, officers in the

²³ Rom Harré & Fathali Moghaddam, *Introduction: The Self and Others in Traditional Psychology and in Positioning Theory*, in *THE SELF AND OTHERS: POSITIONING INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS IN PERSONAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT* 1, 5–6 (Rom Harré & Fathali Moghaddam eds., 2003).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.* at 6.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Harré & Moghaddam, *supra* note 23, at 6.

³¹ Sara Cobb, *A Developmental Approach to Turning Points: Irony as an Ethics for Negotiation Pragmatics*, 11 HARV. NEGOT. L. REV. 147, 163–171 (2006).

³² *Id.*

military, and others who are positioned as having a reliable and socially sanctioned voice. The enemy is initially named by these legitimate spokesmen and women. The task in understanding positioning is to identify what people are doing, how they do it, if they are authorized to do it, or how they take themselves to be authorized to do it. The storyline—the series of narratives—reveals this information.³³ As Czarniawska points out, “We are never the sole authors of our narratives.”³⁴ Every conversation involves positioning that is accepted, rejected, or improved upon by the partners in the conversation.³⁵ Our narratives have common components: “plots” that unfold as stories are told, “character roles” that various actors in the story assume (positions), and storyline “themes” that emerge. Together, these work to provide a coherent story.³⁶

Monk describes ways in which we are capable of engaging in multiple roles or “positions”—mother and wife, son and brother, supervisor and friend, board chair and business owner—as well as engaging in multiple discourses or “stories” at the same time.³⁷ Because identities are socially constructed, they are seldom singular, are dynamic in nature and they are always subject to change. Describing these as “subjectivities,” Monk notes the following dynamics in terms of how identities are both influenced and can change:

The subjectivities [identities] that we live are not necessarily of our own making but are the products of social interaction that are themselves practices of power relationships. When we speak to or about others we are giving them parts in a story, whether we do this explicitly or implicitly. Thus, a speaker makes available a subject position that the other speaker, in the normal course of events, will take up. In this way we influence one another’s subjectivity [identity], often without a conscious intention to do so.³⁸

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ BARBARA CZARNIAWSKA, NARRATING THE ORGANIZATION: DRAMAS OF INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY 14 (1997).

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ NARRATIVE THERAPY IN PRACTICE: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF HOPE 38 (Gerald Monk et al. eds., 1997).

³⁸ *Id.* at 39.

These multiple components—positions and stories—can also be in conflict.³⁹ In conflict situations, the positive position of the speaker is dependent on the negative position constructed for the *other*.⁴⁰ If there is any movement to relocate the *other*, it will threaten the positive position of the speaker.⁴¹ In conflict narratives, a response to an accusation results in the second speaker not beginning a new story, but rather seeking a sub-plot, sub-theme, or new character that can offer an alternative to the original narrative offered by the first speaker.⁴² As this back-and-forth process unfolds and new explanations or evidence emerges, the narrative “thickens” and the destabilization of the original narrative results in the introduction of ambiguity to the identities of the parties involved.⁴³

A. Dichotomous Categories

When we aggregate people—placing large numbers of individuals into groups—in a dichotomous structure that promotes an *other* group who is not like *me* or *us*, we are setting up a social construction of “categories of difference.”⁴⁴ This construction typically results in reinforcing the notion of *otherness*.⁴⁵ The frames we use to understand the *other* are organized into binary spheres that are not absolute categories but are conceived as dichotomous.⁴⁶ For example, a commonly used binary dichotomous sphere is what Okin calls the “public” and the “private.”⁴⁷ Many narratives position men and women in these two spheres, respectively—men are supposedly concerned with the political interaction of the public realm while women are

³⁹ Sara Cobb, *Empowerment and Mediation: A Narrative Perspective*, 9 NEGOT. J. 245 (1993).

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 254.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² L. Harms, *Narrative Transformation and Organizational Change* (Apr. 2004) (unpublished research paper, George Mason University) (on file with author).

⁴³ *Id.* at 4.

⁴⁴ Susan Moller Okin, *Gender, the Public, and the Private*, in FEMINISM AND POLITICS 116, 117 (Anne Phillips ed., 1998).

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Emily B. Mawhinney, *Witness to Gendercide: A Critical Feminist Analysis of Rape as a Tool of War in Bosnia and Rwanda* 13 (Mar. 4, 2005) (unpublished paper, on file with author) (offering other modernist binaries: center vs. periphery, push vs. pull, homogeneity vs. heterogeneity, consumption vs. production, and workers vs. cosmopolitans).

⁴⁷ Okin, *supra* note 44, at 116–17.

relegated to the private sphere of domesticity and reproduction.⁴⁸ Once groups of people are placed into spheres, there are a series of characteristics and rules that get attributed to the members in those spheres.⁴⁹

III. DIALOGUE AND NARRATIVE

Dialogue and narrative, used as techniques for positive growth and change, have historical bases as well as many current practices.⁵⁰ Two seminal thinkers on dialogue were Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher, and David Bohm, a physicist. Buber, best known for his profound work *I and Thou*, presented his philosophy on interpersonal dialogue claiming that individuals can move from an initial *I/It* relationship, whereby the understanding of the *Other* is objectified (*It*), to an *I/Thou* relationship whereby the parties are genuinely engaged in a mutual, open, and authentic conversation.⁵¹ Bohm believed that a basic tenet of relativity theory—that the universe is an unbroken wholeness—can be applied to human relations theory. He reflects about human behavior in conversation in this way:

A new kind of mind . . . begins to come into being which is based on the development of a common meaning that is constantly transforming in the process of the dialogue. People are no longer primarily in opposition, nor [could] they be said to be interacting, rather they are participating in this pool of common meaning which is capable of constant development and change.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 118.

⁴⁹ Cordula Reimann, *Toward Gender Mainstreaming in Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management: Guidelines for the German Technical Co-operation*, DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR TECHNISCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT 6–7 (2001), <http://www2.gtzt.de/dokumente/bib/02-0477.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Background information on dialogue was originally developed for a research project led by Dr. Cheldelin in collaboration with two graduate research assistants at ICAR, Ami Carpenter and Cary Morrison. See John Windmueller, *Making Meaning: A Case Study in Post Democratic Deliberations, Community Resilience, and Dialogue's Dynamics* (Jan. 2006) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, George Mason University) (offering an extensive literature review on dialogue and adds to the further understanding of the post 9/11 dialogues discussed later in this paper).

⁵¹ See generally MARTIN BUBER, *I AND THOU* (Charles Scribner's Sons 2d ed. 1958) (1937).

⁵² DAVID BOHM, *UNFOLDING MEANING* 175 (1995).

Bohm goes on to say that dialogue should have “no pre-established purpose, though at each moment a purpose that is free to change may reveal itself.”⁵³

Narrative as a therapeutic strategy—*narrative therapy* or *narrative practice*—became firmly established in the 1980s and 1990s by White and Epston.⁵⁴ Influenced by anthropologist Gregory Bateson and his concept of “news of difference,”⁵⁵ they have developed a set of theoretical guidelines for narrative practice, have trained others in the helping professions, and have worked with various ethnic groups around the world using this technique.⁵⁶ In the therapeutic milieu, the clients are perceived as the experts of their own lives with skills, competencies, values, belief systems, and abilities to help themselves.⁵⁷ Clinicians work in partnership with them to explore the stories they tell and help them construct alternative stories (narratives) that can be useful in rethinking their situations.⁵⁸ One of their colleagues, Alice Morgan, a narrative family therapist in Melbourne, developed a series of questions for therapists to use when exploring clients’ stories.⁵⁹ Some of these include the following:

- How is this conversation going for you?
- Should we keep talking about this or would you be more interested in . . . ?
- Is this interesting to you?
- Is this what we should spend our time talking about?

⁵³ *Id.* Though his extensive writing about dialogue has informed practice today, most dialogues are designed with a pre-established purpose and an explicit agenda. This was certainly true in the 9/11 case that follows.

⁵⁴ See generally MICHAEL WHITE & DAVID EPSTON, *NARRATIVE MEANS TO THERAPEUTIC ENDS* (1991).

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 2.

⁵⁶ Michael White and David Epston created the Dulwich Center in Adelaide and Auckland, and run 2-year training programs for professionals there. In addition, they have conducted trainings in the U.S., South America, Western Europe, Canada, and the Middle East. See generally *Narrative Approaches*, <http://www.narrativeapproaches.com/> (last visited Oct. 24, 2006); see also The Dulwich Center Website, <http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au/index.htm> (last visited Oct. 24, 2006).

⁵⁷ See generally *Narrative Approaches to Therapy*, <http://www.narrativepractice.com/>.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Alice Morgan, *What is Narrative Therapy*, DULWICH CENTER, 2000, www.dulwichcentre.com.au (last visited Sept. 10, 2006).

- I was wondering if you would be more interested in me asking you some more about this or whether we should focus on X, Y, or Z?⁶⁰

These questions illustrate ways the conversations are guided by the interests of the clients—not the therapists—as embedded in its theory is a healthy suspicion of authority. Rather, practitioners “partner” with their clients through a process whereby “re-authoring” or “restorying” their conversations emerges. Sequenced events that had happened over time according to a “plot” begin to have new patterns of meaning.⁶¹

Monk and Winslade and Monk have demonstrated the remarkable promise of this technique in both therapy and mediation.⁶² It is now more broadly used to improve communication, build trust, increase mutual understanding, and find common meaning.⁶³ Extending personal conversations to larger groups, dialogues are routinely employed as a means to open communication avenues between individuals and the communities in which they live.⁶⁴ More than just a method of open interaction, a chance to vent hostilities, or participate in group gripe sessions, the purpose of a well-facilitated dialogue is to bring about changes in attitudes and behaviors in individuals with the expectation that a derivative change will follow in their respective communities.⁶⁵ That is, if individuals are willing and able to make changes themselves, these changes will impact the ecology of the community within which they are engaged.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² See *supra* note 37; see also JOHN WINSLADE & GERALD MONK, *NARRATIVE MEDIATION: A NEW APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION* (2000).

⁶³ See BOHM, *supra* note 52; see generally University of Colorado, International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict, Conflict Research Consortium, Treating Communication Problems, http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treating_overlays.htm (last visited Oct. 21, 2006).

⁶⁴ See generally Martha L. McCoy & Patrick Scully, *Deliberative Dialogue to Expand Civic Engagement: What Kind of Talk Does Democracy Need*, 91 NAT'L. CIV. REV. 117 (2002), available at http://www.ncl.org/publications/ncr/91-2/ncr91-2_article.pdf.

⁶⁵ Benjamin Hu, *Consortium Hears Advice From Study Circles on Race, School Choice*, STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER, June 14, 2006, <http://www.studycircles.org/en/Article 448.aspx>; see Maura McDermott, *Morristown, N.J. To Examine Issues around Immigration and Racism*, STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER, Mar. 28, 2006, <http://www.studycircle.org/en/article.410.aspx>.

⁶⁶ *Id.* This is an example of a deviation in the use of dialogue as originally described by Bohm, who believed dialogues should be held without agendas.

Due in part to the global increase in violence rooted in ethnic and religious differences, we have witnessed an increase in dialogue workshops across the nation as well as internationally.⁶⁷ Private foundations such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the New York Community Trust, and the Freddie Mac Foundation have intentionally committed resources to support these ventures.⁶⁸ Even the government—the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) as an example—has provided funds for post-9/11 dialogues to help build community resilience.⁶⁹

The Western World did not create dialogue nor is its use limited to the West. It has a long tradition as William Issacs notes, “Whenever one looks throughout history, one can see evidence of tribal gatherings, community events, and councils, where the central glue of human organizing was conversation—often around a fire—usually carried on for days at a time.”⁷⁰ Internationally, there has been a promising increase in the use of dialogue as a countermeasure to global violence that began well before the terrorist attacks on 9/11. In November 1998, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 2001 as the *United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations*, intentionally rejecting the *Clash of Civilizations* concept.⁷¹ H. E. Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania, hosted the April 2001 Conference and stated in his opening address:

⁶⁷ See generally College of William and Mary Int’l Dialogues, <http://www.wm.edu/as/graduate/internationaldialogues.php> (last visited Oct. 21, 2006); see generally Sustainable Development Dialogues, <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/international/dialogues/> (last visited Oct. 21, 2006).

⁶⁸ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/> (last visited Oct. 21, 2006) (noting that at the center of their grant-making goals is rebuilding distressed communities); see also The New York City Trust, http://www.nycctcfi.org/images/civic/affairs_grant_strategy_2.1.pdf (last visited Oct. 21, 2006). Casey and New York City Trust are the primary supporters of the *Public Agenda*, a non-profit organization that has explored dialogue between police and community members. Freddie Mac provided funding for ICAR’s post 9/11 community-based dialogues and follow-up dialogue research.

⁶⁹ See REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE, FEMA DOLLARS AT WORK: POST 9/11, FEMA GRANTED FUNDS TO SEVERAL COUNTIES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA TO FORM THE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT (Dec. 29, 2005), <http://www.house.gov/pence/rsc/doc/FEMAdollars03.pdf> (discussing the need for cross-cultural dialogues that were an essential part of the Community Resilience Project and to which FEMA gave funding).

⁷⁰ WILLIAM ISAACS, *DIALOGUE AND THE ART OF THINKING TOGETHER* 77 (1999).

⁷¹ About the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, <http://www.unu.edu/dialogue/> (last visited June 7, 2006).

Globalisation is expanding in today's world. The distances between its parts are shrinking and relations among peoples intensify. The contemporary world, dominated by modern information technologies, not only forces closer dialogue among civilisations, but is also gradually turning into a civilisation of dialogue. Of course, this is a complex and contradictory transformation. Quite often it is impeded by stereotypes that for many centuries have hampered the relations among civilizations.⁷²

Adamkus goes on to call for dialogue among the civilizations to "safeguard mutual respect and tolerance."⁷³

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has responsibly supported East-West intercultural dialogues throughout Central Asia. The Silk Roads dialogue, for example, examined the various types of exchanges that had taken place along the road over the centuries, "shedding light on the many identities and common heritage of the peoples involved."⁷⁴ Similarly, the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (ISESCO) sponsored regional theme-based dialogues in 2000 and 2001: *Dialogue and Coexistence among Civilizations and Cultures* in Berlin,⁷⁵ *Dialogue among Civilizations in a Changing World* in Rabat,⁷⁶ *Dialogue among Civilizations: Theory and Practice* in Tunis,⁷⁷ and *Dialogue among Civilizations for Coexistence* in Damascus.⁷⁸

Dialogue has strong support and popularity today for a variety of reasons. Bohm says that the ways we understand meaning-making processes is through dialogue:

Language is collective. Most of our basic assumptions come from our society, about how society works, about what sort of person we are

⁷² H.E. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, Opening Address at the International Conference on "Dialogue among Civilizations" (Apr. 23, 2001), available at <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue/vilnius/adamkus.htm>.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ About the Silk Roads Project, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/silkroads/index.shtml> (last visited June 7, 2006).

⁷⁵ See generally Dialogue and Coexistence among Civilizations and Cultures, <http://www.isesco.org.ma/English/Dialogue/berlin.html> (last visited Oct. 24, 2006).

⁷⁶ See generally Dialogue among Civilizations in a Changing World, <http://www.isesco.org.ma/English/Dialogue/rabat.html> (last visited Oct. 18, 2006).

⁷⁷ See generally Dialogue among Civilizations: Theory and Practice in Tunis, <http://www.isesco.org.ma/English/Dialogue/tunis.html> (last visited Oct. 18, 2006).

⁷⁸ See generally Dialogue among Civilizations for Coexistence in Damascus, <http://www.isesco.org.ma/English/Dialogue/damas.html> (last visited Oct. 18, 2006).

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supposed to be, and about relationships, institutions, and so on. Therefore, we need to pay attention to thought both individually and collectively.⁷⁹

Its potential power is also noted by Margaret Wheatley in her work on healing conversations.⁸⁰ She declares, "I believe we can change the world if we start talking to one another again."⁸¹

Corcoran and Greisdorf believe that in "honest conversations, everyone who has a stake in the movement towards constructive change comes to the table and remains engaged in the process of transformation"⁸² by allowing each participant to share experiences, be open to others' experiences, and try to understand how all parties make meaning of these experiences.⁸³ What underpins their theory is reflected in their statement, "When individuals change, the structure of society changes. When the structure of society changes, individuals change. *Both are necessary and both go together.*"⁸⁴

Galtung, in his writing on working with multiculturalism, identifies four stages along a continuum of change; the third requires dialogue.⁸⁵ He says we move from: (1) intolerance; to (2) tolerance with passive peaceful coexistence; to (3) evidence of dialogical based change that embraces mutual respect and curiosity; and finally to (4) full coexistence whereby more than one culture gets integrated inside the person.⁸⁶ Galtung reminds us that mere "contact" with others is insufficient when dealing with multicultural conflicts.⁸⁷ Rather, the conditions of dialogue need to be carefully crafted so that participants feel safe and will engage in active listening and open themselves to new ways of thinking about situations and issues.⁸⁸

⁷⁹ DAVID BOHM, ON DIALOGUE 11 (Lee Nichol ed., 1966).

⁸⁰ See generally MARGARET WHEATLEY, TURNING TO ONE ANOTHER: SIMPLE CONVERSATION TO RESTORE HOPE TO THE FUTURE (2002).

⁸¹ *Id.* at 3.

⁸² See generally ROBERT L. CORCORAN & KAREN ELLIOTT GREISDORF, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES (2001).

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ *Id.* at 11.

⁸⁵ John Galtung, *Rethinking Conflict: The Cultural Approach*, Council of Europe, 2002, [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/culture/action/dialogue/pub_DGIV_CULT_PREV\(2002\)1_Galtung_E.PDF?L=E](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/culture/action/dialogue/pub_DGIV_CULT_PREV(2002)1_Galtung_E.PDF?L=E).

⁸⁶ *Id.* at 36–38.

⁸⁷ *Id.* at 37.

⁸⁸ *Id.*

IV. BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN TIME OF FEAR

Informed by the theory and research on identity formation, positioning, and narrative, the post-9/11 Community Resilience Project intentionally used this methodology to address identity- and victim-based conflicts by exploring the storylines and frameworks people had about *others* in their respective communities. With initial support from FEMA, the Fairfax County Community Resilience Project (CRP) in northern Virginia initiated a two year project to help communities create and sustain resilience in a time of fear, stereotyping, and law enforcement crackdowns. ICAR subcontracted with CRP to develop and implement four initiatives that would run simultaneously.

A. Methodology

1. *Sharing the Experience of Migration*

The first initiative was the creation of a video to document personal stories of migration from members of different cultural groups in northern Virginia representing continents all over the world.⁸⁹ We thought we could address the problem of stereotyping by using powerful imagery and compelling personal stories that would ultimately put a “human face” on immigrants and remind all residents of northern Virginia of the hopes, fears, and trauma associated with migration. Documenting individual and family stories of that process, the video would enable viewers to imagine and remember difficulties, problems, hopes, and challenges that accompanied their own decision to migrate.

2. *Building Community Resilience Through Cross-Cultural Dialogues*

The second initiative was to develop and convene a series of community dialogues to be held in various parts of Fairfax County. On September 11, 2002, George Mason University hosted an *Interfaith Gathering United for Peace: A Day of Remembrance* that was planned by the Fairfax County Faith Communities in Action. As a call for community unity and with expressions for peace, seven faith communities—Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Christianity, and Baha’i—each led a portion of the service. The

⁸⁹ See Cheldelin, *supra* note 8. This project was developed and implemented by Carlos Sluzki, M.D., a faculty colleague at ICAR.

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original proposal was to build on this event and offer four community dialogues in northern Virginia beginning October 2002. We also proposed four dialogue models—each dialogue would use a different one—conceptualized as opportunities for learning and making connections on the part of participants, and for research on the usefulness of the various models. The dialogues were created to function as a set—participants were encouraged to attend all the dialogues—yet structured to stand alone to allow newcomers to join at any event. At each dialogue, we set aside one table and sought volunteers to be videotaped.

Due to the initial success, we secured supplemental funds from FEMA and the Freddie Mac Foundation to conduct three additional dialogues, assist with a fourth, and create training videos. Each dialogue focused on a particular theme, and each culminated in a conversation about challenges created by law enforcement and governmental responses to 9/11 in the participants' respective communities.

Announcements introducing the dialogue program were distributed on fliers to local newspapers and agencies, and electronically to our collective social networks. Some of the language of the initial invitation included the following:

The Community Resilience Project . . . will present a series of 4 cross-cultural dialogues in the local community to encourage the community to participate in a greater discussion of the American Dream, Patriotism, Citizenship, Cultural differences, Assimilation and more. . . . In the process, maybe [you can] answer the question of who they are, where they are from, why they are here and how they are coping. . . . The United States is described as a country of immigrants who came in search of a better life for them and their families and a search for freedom. The time to talk, question, understand, educate . . . is here.⁹⁰

A similar strategy was used for each of the remaining dialogues: electronic and hard copy fliers were widely distributed, including invitations to previous participants. In less than one month, by September 24, 2002, more than sixty members of Fairfax County responded to our invitation and attended the first dialogue.⁹¹

⁹⁰ The Multicultural Forum Community Resilience Project flyer was on the website of the Community Resilience Project but it no longer exists (flyer on file with the author).

⁹¹ Thereafter the attendance regularly reflected 150 to 200 participants.

3. *Training Community-Based Volunteer Facilitators*

It was clear from the beginning that if we were going to conduct large-scale community dialogues, we would need skilled facilitators at the ratio of no less than one per eight participants (e.g., if 150 citizens attended, we would need nearly 20 facilitators). The third initiative involved conducting a series of trainings for people willing to take on this challenge. We recruited volunteer members from the CRP, masters and doctoral level graduate students at ICAR, professional colleagues trained as mediators, and human resource experts. We had twenty prepared to lead the first dialogue. The second year we recruited community members for facilitation training.

4. *Process*

i. *Brief Description of Community Dialogues*

The first dialogue was held at a local community college in northern Virginia and focused on the impact on residents in northern Virginia of increased nationalism and patriotism in the United States. The group-at-large facilitator introduced the topic, explained the format, and broadly defined the two terms.⁹² A small American flag was the centerpiece at each round table. Participants were asked to reflect on and share the meaning of the flag, ways in which the meanings may have changed over the past year, and ways the participants were impacted by what that flag meant to them and to others. The final discussion focused on ways increased nationalism and patriotism affected their communities and what they could or might want to do to create community resilience.

A similar format was used for each of the dialogues that followed: we introduced the theme, explained the format, asked a few leading questions—either at the beginning or paced throughout the meeting—and then conducted a facilitated discussion in small groups of about eight at each table. In addition to nationalism and patriotism, we covered topics of fear, mistrust, stereotyping, racism, bias, and safety. We also focused on community building. Participants shared personal experiences of federal and local law enforcement raids and personal challenges of being “different.” They brainstormed ways to make their families, schools, and local communities resilient. They made commitments to various suggestions, such as hosting block parties and attending other faith-based services and activities.

⁹² Sandra Cheldelin served as the at-large facilitator for all dialogues.

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The dialogue commemorating the second anniversary, however,—held September 10, 2003 at George Mason University—was part of a larger program that culminated in a candlelight service at the university pond. To launch the dialogue component of the program, we presented a slideshow displaying images of many events citizens in the greater Washington, D.C. area had encountered since 9/11. These included the search for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, the Brentwood Post Office and Capitol Hill anthrax scares, the greater D.C. sniper killings (by Lee Boyd Malvo and John Allen Muhammad), the Severe Acute Respiratory System (SARS) epidemic, the preparation for and clean-up after Hurricane Isabel, the war on terror, and the war in Iraq. We asked participants to reflect on the impact of these events on themselves and their loved ones, changes that had occurred that seemed fairly permanent, and ways in which their communities had changed.

ii. *Dialogue Models*

In addition to sponsoring a series of dialogues, we also conducted research on the viability of four models. At the first dialogue, we introduced the *Fishbowl* model, where an initial group of eight discussed a controversial topic in a small circle in the center of the room while the remaining participants stood behind them, watched, and listened as stories unfolded. An empty chair was placed in the “fishbowl” to allow anyone from the outer circle to join and engage in the conversation.⁹³ Following the initial small group discussion, all participants went to their respective tables, with a facilitator at each, and continued the conversation (in this case, on patriotism and nationalism).⁹⁴

The topic of the second dialogue, just one month later, focused on living in a climate of fear and uncertainty. Enrollment almost doubled from the first community meeting. We introduced the evening by using a *Roundtable* model, consisting of eight participants and one facilitator per (round) table. Participants at eighteen tables discussed their personal experiences of racism, bias, and issues of stereotyping.⁹⁵

⁹³ We asked participants within the fishbowl the following questions: “Where were you on the morning of 9/11 and what were you doing?” “What did you experience the days that followed that seemed directly connected to 9/11?”

⁹⁴ The questions asked at the table included the following: “What did the flag mean to you on [September 10, 2001]?” “What does it mean to you now?” “What have been your experiences regarding any changes?”

⁹⁵ The questions asked at the table included the following: “What have been your experiences of racism or bias?” “. . . of stereotyping?” “What did you do?” And, “What did you want to do?”

The third model introduced was the *Buzz*: 2-4-8, named because of the escalation of chatter that surfaces in the room and the unique format utilized for the discussion. That evening we focused on a recent *Newsweek* front page with the printed question, "Why do They Hate Us?" Dyads ("2") were asked an initial question. The second part of the Buzz model required each dyad to join another dyad ("4") to consider a different question. The third part asked each group of four to join another group of four ("8"). This newly formed group, with the help of a facilitator, responded to another series of questions.⁹⁶

The final model, an adaptation of the *World Café*, was introduced at the fourth dialogue. There were three parts of the dialogue, and with each, some members at a table left while others joined. The spirit of the café is to cross-pollinate ideas, perspectives, and stories as participants move from table to table. Participants began the evening at tables of eight to discuss issues of trust and safety in their communities. The first question asked them to talk about their experiences of and reactions to the war with Iraq.⁹⁷ About thirty minutes later, half of the members at each table rotated to another table—the four to the left of the facilitator—and responded to questions about trust.⁹⁸ The third (and final) part moved four participants on the right of the facilitator to a new table to discuss the theme of safety.⁹⁹ The evening concluded by asking participants what they would be willing to commit to do differently (influenced by the dialogues, their own experiences, and the stories of others' experiences the past twenty months).

⁹⁶ Dyads were asked to respond to the question "Who is 'They'?" Groups of four were asked to consider "Who is 'Us'?" and "What has been your experience of 'Us'?" Groups of eight were asked questions "Do we need a 'They' and an 'Us' to hate?" and "What have been your experiences that reflect this?"

⁹⁷ Specific questions for the first part of this dialogue included: "What was your experience knowing we were going to war?" "... when you saw it on television all day?" "... when you got conflicting (or nonconflicting) information?" and "... when peers, neighbors, colleagues at work agreed or disagreed with your thinking?"

⁹⁸ Specific questions included the following: "The 'battle' or 'war' is over. What are your feelings now?" "In what ways has the war left you suspicious of others?" "Who?" "What is different now since the declaration of ending the struggle?"

⁹⁹ Specific questions included the following: "People were divided about the war here in Fairfax County. Do you feel safer now and if so, in what ways ... if not ... why not?" "Are we making the world a safer place?" "How many of us boycotted 'French' and if so why? If not, why not?"

B. *Outcomes*

1. *Evidence of Identity and Victim-Based Trauma*

We expected to find evidence of identity- and victim-based trauma as a result of the fallout of 9/11 and the many events that followed. Indeed, we found it to be true. Many stories from participants reflected this. Two examples of trauma are noted below:

It touched me, 9/11, and the anthrax . . . because I live just maybe a mile away from the Brentwood Post Office. So every time something happens, like, I'm like right there, so when different things happen there . . . I don't know, somehow I feel, like, numb, and I couldn't respond because I don't want to feel, because so many things were happening I couldn't respond.¹⁰⁰

An example of becoming a victim is reflected in the story of a young Muslim woman:

I've been in the U.S. since [1982]. I was very small at that time. As we grew up we didn't have a choice. We came here to seek freedom from [the] Soviet invasion and as I grew up over time I had the choice of going back. I chose to stay here. [On] Oct. 6, I realized I don't feel like I belong here. I lost my way.¹⁰¹

We know from research on trauma that there are predictable stages involved in the healing process—acquiring or regaining control over one's life—following a traumatic event.¹⁰² For example, Herman identifies three such stages: safety, acknowledgement, and reconnection.¹⁰³ Some healing programs offer victims safe places to begin their process of healing.¹⁰⁴ Gutlove and Thompson suggest that when trauma sufferers tell their stories

¹⁰⁰ Quote from an African-American woman dialogue participant living in Washington, D.C. Videotape: *Introducing Dialogue* (Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, 2004) (on file with author).

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² See JUDITH LEWIS HERMAN, *TRAUMA AND RECOVERY* (1992); see also Carlos E. Sluzki, *Toward a Model of Family and Political Victimization: Implications for Treatment and Recovery*, 56 *PSYCHIATRY* 178, available at http://mars.gmu.edu/dspace/bitstream/1920/511/2/sluzki_1993_toward_victimization.pdf.

¹⁰³ See *id.*

¹⁰⁴ See INGER AGGER, *THE BLUE ROOM: TRAUMA AND TESTIMONY AMONG REFUGEE WOMEN, A PSYCHO-SOCIAL EXPLORATION* (1994).

to a compassionate group who listens carefully and with empathy, victims are better able to restore their place in society.¹⁰⁵ This seemed to be the case for an Afghani woman who reflected on the impact of the dialogues for her:

I'm in the process of becoming an American. I'm from Afghanistan. September 11, 12, listening to the radio after the planes, I heard a well known radio announcer say to an Arab gentleman: "Because those people are Arabs, they are your brothers and you are responsible." To me, this is frightening because as hard as we try to become a part of this culture there are still these arrogant people who say "no." Because there are evildoers out there you are responsible because you come from the same culture, and [the] same religion, and [you have the] same hairstyle. It is absurd. And to me when we see the flag flying each day since that day it is frightening. I cannot approach people who have a flag because I cannot say what I feel and I feel like they are looking at me like I have no right to be here. I'm happy with this project resilience as they allow people to come together and have discussions like this so you don't feel alone.¹⁰⁶

When trauma involves another person or group in conflict, the victim needs to manage ways to coexist with the *other*.¹⁰⁷ Successful coexistence allows parties to engage in cooperation with the *other*.¹⁰⁸ A white woman participant showed this insight:

The beauty of this dialogue process here is to allow us to interconnect so that we don't have the "us" and the "them" so much and so that we don't allow ourselves to be led along by [those] who want to maintain [and] keep their power and to polarize us so that we are not together.¹⁰⁹

Herman identifies stages through which people move as they heal from a traumatic experience: safety, acknowledgement and reconnection.¹¹⁰ Using trauma research as a metaphor for our dialogue project, our goal was to set in place the necessary conditions to build a resilient interdependence among the residents of northern Virginia—that they could and would "reconnect" and

¹⁰⁵ See generally PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALING: A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS (Paula Gutlove & Gordon Thompson eds., 2003).

¹⁰⁶ See Introducing Dialogue, *supra* note 100.

¹⁰⁷ See generally Eric Brahm, Trauma Healing, Beyond Intractability (Guy Burgess & Heidi Burgess eds., 2004), available at http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/trauma_healing/.

¹⁰⁸ See generally Sluzki, *supra* note 102.

¹⁰⁹ See Introducing Dialogue, *supra* note 100.

¹¹⁰ See HERMAN, *supra* note 102.

be able to work in collaboration with each other should there be future events that threaten some (or all) members of the community. A small group facilitator reported to the large group what they discussed: "Listening and talking, making a point to interact [with the *other*] was another thing that came up for us. . . . And the last point that was made was to reach out to people who are prejudiced."¹¹¹

At each dialogue, we intentionally provided opportunities for people to tell their stories following specific traumatic events—9/11, anthrax, the D.C. snipers, SARS, the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, and Hurricane Isabel—documenting some of what people said they experienced by rapporteurs and video. Two compelling stories told in the *Fishbowl* about the morning of 9/11 are noted below:

Everyone said, "Everyone should come out to the hall and watch the monitor." And we watched as the second one hit. There was no, ah, . . . I was surprised at what the other lady said about hugging each other and [that] there was camaraderie. There was nothing like that. Everybody was standing still. It really made me feel like judgment day because judgment day in the Muslim perspective is that everybody will be naked, standing on [his or her] own, and nobody will think about anyone else because everyone is scared to death. And that is how it felt at that moment.¹¹²

And around 10:15 my phone rang and I got a message from the Pentagon and the message read, "Looking glass is airborne." And at that point I think my life had changed . . . which meant that the United States was under attack, which meant the Presidential plane and the Joint Chiefs were now evacuated from both ground stations and are now in the air. And I could remember after I had gotten off the phone call I went to my gun closet and strapped on my side arm and slept with my side arm for the next week.¹¹³

2. *Learning from Dialogue Stories*

We collectively discussed what had worked and what had not; what we would likely do the same; and what we should, could, or must do differently. The shared stories helped inform participants as to what they learned and provided suggestions as to what they could do should similar conditions or events present themselves in the future, e.g., continued targeting by law

¹¹¹ See Introducing Dialogue, *supra* note 100.

¹¹² *Id.* Quotation from a Muslim woman.

¹¹³ *Id.* Quotation from a white male in the military.

enforcement, feeling alienated from neighbors, being excluded, or feeling fearful.

A remarkably diverse population attended each dialogue. It was common to have several faith-based groups represented as well as members of various professions, including law enforcement. More than sixty participated in the first dialogue. We regularly had 150–200 participants thereafter. Many attended more than one. At one table, on one occasion, participants discussed topics that included fearfulness, mistrust of government policies, police actions, and ways their personal relationships had changed. Some of their reflections include the following statements: “My neighbors and I used to be much closer. Now I feel like they are avoiding me. My wife and I used to host an annual neighborhood barbeque at our home. We didn’t have it this year,” said an Iraqi-American male.¹¹⁴ “Recently at a local airport my 9-year-old and I were questioned extensively because his Islamic name came up on a watch list. I’m afraid when I send him to school that something will happen to him,” shared an Egyptian-American female.¹¹⁵ Also, a Catholic nun added, “On 9/11 I walked outside and everything looked the same, but I knew nothing was the same. Things had changed forever.”¹¹⁶

A variety of data collection sources were used to assess impact. Facilitators and community resilience personnel debriefed each dialogue. Responses were consistently positive and suggestions were incorporated in the planning for dialogues that followed. Anecdotal responses were also very favorable. Many participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunities to talk about sensitive issues. Many reported new linkages made between participants. Increasing numbers of participants attended each dialogue, and we interpreted this as evidence that we must be meeting a felt need. The lively discussions at most tables confirmed that people were engaged in the provocative questions we offered. At each dialogue, we requested written feedback (using an assessment form) and offered a “business card” with an e-mail address should they want to contact us after further reflections. Some did.

3. Facilitation Training

By the end of the first year—four dialogues convened—we had a team of thirty trained facilitators. We wanted to help communities continue

¹¹⁴ Notes taken by ICAR staff member Trudi Bick while listening to one dialogue group.

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

¹¹⁶ *Id.*

sponsoring dialogues when the project was complete, so we spent the last two months of the project recruiting community volunteers. We sought cooperation and then commitment from hundreds of individuals in several organizations in the Interfaith Community as potential “response teams” for any future traumatic events (and preventative work in the meantime). The leaders of these formed a steering committee to organize future events and provide us access to multiple faith-based organizations. Beyond the core group of ICAR students and Community Resilience program staff, we trained groups from the Jewish, Baptist, Catholic, Muslim, Presbyterian, and Sikh organizations within Fairfax County, in addition to a number of citizens representing themselves. By the end, we had one hundred prepared to facilitate community dialogues.¹¹⁷

4. Products

Several products resulted from the four initiatives and are available to community members for future interventions. From the first initiative of documenting immigrants’ stories, Sluzki created *They are Us* in video and CD format along with accompanying training materials.¹¹⁸ Participants viewing the video are encouraged to focus on three issues: immigrants’ stories that seem most closely aligned to their own backgrounds and histories; stories that seem most alien to their own backgrounds; and themes about how families successfully integrated within the greater community—how they found and used support services, social networks and associations.

As an outcome of the eight community dialogues, Cheldelin created two training videos, *Introducing Dialogue*¹¹⁹ and *Dialogues for the Workplace* in CD and DVD format.¹²⁰ These are educational and training materials used to learn about dialogue and ways dialogue can be used in organizations to address issues of diversity and identity-based conflicts.

Four dialogue models were studied for impact and general usefulness: *Fishbowl*, *Roundtable*, *Buzz (2-4-8)* and a modified *World Café*. Based on reflections of their own experiences by the staff of the CRP, the feedback

¹¹⁷ Dialogues have continued in two communities of Fairfax County since 2004 when the FEMA funded project ended.

¹¹⁸ See generally DVD: *They are Us* (Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution Training 2004) (on file with author). Videos and CDs are available at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University.

¹¹⁹ See *Introducing Dialogue*, *supra* note 100.

¹²⁰ See generally DVD: *Dialogue for the Workplace* (Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution Training, 2004) (on file with author).

from participants, observations of videotapes of dialogue sessions, and the dissertation research of John Windmueller, we concluded that the Roundtable model was the least disruptive for large groups (150–200), and that the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of members at the table is more critical than the skills of the facilitator. When facilitators allowed members of the dialogue to talk with each other and take “ownership” of their process and content, greater significant interaction occurs.¹²¹

V. FINDING AND BUILDING COMMON GROUND

This Article has discussed the research and theory about identity and narratives, corresponding positioning and re-positioning that occurs to parties in a conversation as their stories unfold. When traumatic events occur such as 9/11, or people become victims to the backlash of hate and fear, the personal experiences of and reactions to the responses impact our sense of ourselves—our identities. A narrative begins in reaction to the violence. The violent acts position us in relation to the perpetrators and this positioning often has social sanctions that support it. After 9/11 we witnessed increased and reinforced stereotyping across the country. The known hatred behind terrorism and fears of re-victimization or backlash increased the complexities for immigrant or minority populations or other identity-based groups to know how to respond. The role of and response by law enforcement becomes an essential part of the reactive stories we tell, how they get told, and how we position ourselves and get positioned by others in the process as a new narrative emerges in reaction to the violence.

The case presented demonstrates the viability of dialogue as a platform to permit significant change. The process allowed personal stories to be told. As participants assimilated these stories, victims got re-positioned. One story was about the police arriving late (after 10:00 pm) one evening at the home of a Muslim family. Police asked why people were getting together “at odd hours.” The participant said that her cousin invited them in, sat them down, and introduced them to the family members: “This is my Mom and it is her birthday. We are normal human beings.” The police left without incident but the family and friends imagined that police had targeted them as a potential terrorist cell.¹²² She reported that the dialogues gave her an opportunity to tell about the late-night call by police and get support from members at her table.

¹²¹ See Windmueller, *supra* note 50.

¹²² See Introducing Dialogue, *supra* note 100.

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Evidence of shifts in victims' identities and positions was also presented. Relating to gender awareness, one Iraqi male reflected on his experience:

I thought dialogues are mostly for women and that men are not that interested in sharing feelings so I was surprised the first time, or was it the second time, when we were in Herndon, when I saw so many men participating there in a very emotional way in the dialogue at the various tables. I learned a lot from it but I was just mainly surprised to see so many men engaged in the dialogue. I thought to myself, coming from Iraq, wouldn't that be an incredible vehicle if this could be actually done in the war-torn country today and get things settled this way rather than shooting at one another?¹²³

Listening to victims of federal raids and people who believed they were suspicious neighbors or felt slighted in their local pharmacies, grocery stores, theatres, and restaurants, who spoke from their hearts about both their own fears and their sense of public shame, resulted in one participant stating the following:

I just want to add one little thing that I think is important, too. And it is that the dialogues really made me, in a personal way, understand how small the world has become, how much closer we all are together, and it has sort of taken an abstract thought and made it personalized for me.¹²⁴

Participants reported ways they had been positioned indirectly—attributions towards them were negative—yet the dialogues gave them space to change the storylines by rejecting the attributions and providing alternative ways of framing what was happening as a result of the federal raids:

Because of the multicultural dialogue sharing different perspectives, I felt I am accepted, as I am, who I am, where I come from, and also I felt a sense of togetherness. So I felt part of the culture, part of this country, where I am, where I chose to be. My country. So in a way the patriotism was evoked for me and I think that was a unique experience for me.¹²⁵

Strategically, some of the targeted groups made sure they were well represented at each of the dialogues, shared their stories, and began the process of re-positioning themselves and their identity-based groups in relation to the majority-based group members. A Muslim woman shared that,

¹²³ *Id.* Quotation from a white woman.

¹²⁴ See *Introducing Dialogue*, *supra* note 100.

¹²⁵ *Id.* Quotation from an Asian-American woman.

"After all the flags showed up, well, I put on my Community Resilience Project T-shirt and that is what I wear when I exercise. It has a big American flag on my back and everyone is okay with me."¹²⁶ They insisted on getting others at their tables to influence members of the others' social networks to hear about and consider their experiences. They also asked for help to challenge U.S. foreign policies so that as Americans themselves, they could feel safe in and good about their country. They outright rejected being placed as the *other* as if they were a member of a dichotomous group. Many told of their eagerness to fly the American flag at their homes or on their cars not only out of fear, but also to force those fearful of them to think about issues in more complex ways. As a result, there was some evidence of movement along Galtung's continuum of change from intolerance of the *other* (pre-dialogue backlash), to passive peaceful coexistence (listening and incorporating stories at the dialogue), to evidence of dialogically-based changes embracing mutual respect and curiosity (community-based post-dialogue activities).¹²⁷

The sustainability of outcomes from a dialogue process will only occur with intentionality. That is, beyond having a mere conversation, dialogue must be designed to help parties incorporate or assimilate the stories of the *other*. When some of the parties have socially sanctioned power—law enforcement, government officials, and even members of the dominant ethnic groups, in this case—the process must address ways to re-position the less powerful to provide them a legitimate voice. Revisiting Harré and Moghaddam's position triangle (the position, speech or other acts and storyline), the intentionality of dialogue is to embrace such a triangle and design a process to change its parts.

This case is an example of successful intentionality. As a result of another terrorist attack, the focus of blame, suspicion, and backlash should shift to the real perpetrators and away from stereotyping any member of the perpetrators' identity groups. Dialogue is a useful conflict resolution technique because it provides a platform for people to listen to each other and goes beyond mere "contact" with the *other*—hoping the contact will somehow change the course of events. As a platform, it has evolved beyond Bohm's "no agenda" process by assisting parties to change the narratives about each other and see the usefulness and wisdom of working

¹²⁶ *Id.*

¹²⁷ It is not clear that Galtung's fourth phase—full coexistence whereby one culture gets integrated inside the person—ever happened, but it was the overarching goal of the Community Resilience Project.

collaboratively. This is poignantly noted in the story of a Muslim woman as she reflected on what had happened at one dialogue and its outcome:

And someone at our table, one of the participants, turned to me and said: “Your people did this and what do you think about that?” And before I even got an answer out of my mouth all the other people at my table—and there was no one else from a Middle Eastern culture at my table—they all said, “They are not her people.” So everyone at that table said that. And that really made me feel good because it means that if I had heard her say that in another setting, where people were not allowing themselves to say what they really think, they would have stayed quiet, she would have said that, I might have thought that they all agreed with her. But they didn’t. And I would have never known that had it been a different situation.¹²⁸

Not only does this reflect her insight into the thinking and meaning-making of others at the table, especially when they came to her defense—which she did not know they would—but also the insight that dialogue gives all parties an opportunity not to be silenced, and even permission to find their voices. These did.

When one participant noted her disappointment in the reduction of her civil liberties, a member of her group challenged her. The sequential conversation was as follows:

What I had found to make a difference—and [now I think] it doesn’t make a difference—is to send letters to our senators and leaders and tell them what is on our mind.¹²⁹

Response: I think it does make a difference. You may not perceive it at that moment in time. I think that is the problem. I think we all want to see something happen immediately, now, and that is not the way the process works. The way democracy works: it is a slow, plodding process.¹³⁰

The goal of the dialogue was to set in place the necessary conditions to build resilient interdependence among community residents of northern Virginia, some of whom had been targeted by law enforcement (as well as by other citizens) as a threat to the security and well-being of our American neighborhoods and workplaces. Dialogue as a methodology—regardless of the model—moved participants from fear of others not like themselves to an increased understanding of the others’ plight, struggle, and desire to be part

¹²⁸ See *Introducing Dialogue*, *supra* note 100.

¹²⁹ *Id.*

¹³⁰ *Id.*

of the American democratic process. Shared understanding is an essential component of resilient communities. That two communities have decided to continue these dialogues speaks to their belief that the process is working for them.¹³¹

¹³¹ E-mail from Maggie Scott, Administrative Assistant, Community Interfaith Liaison Office, to Sandra Cheldelin, Professor, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University (Oct. 20, 2006, 15:50:05 EST) (on file with author).